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FOUNDER'S DAY ADDRESS

ROBERT R. MOTON

Principal of Tuskegee Institute

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PRESS OF THE HAMPTON NORMAL
AND AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE
HAMPTON, VIRGINIA, 1917

AN APOSTLE OF GOOD WILL*

BY ROBERT R. MOTON

Principal of Tuskegee Institute

IN this time of the world's great strife, when there is universal longing for peace, it is well for us here at beautiful, peaceful, restful Hampton Institute, because of the wisdom, patience, and sacrifice that have gone into establishing it, to think of its founder, who worked out here in concrete form the fundamental principle of universal and lasting peace, equally as applicable to nations as to races.

The angel's song, "Peace on earth ; good will toward men," meant good will toward *all* men, not to our own race or our own nation only, not to people of our own social status merely ; it meant good will toward *all humanity*.

General Armstrong was able always to recognize humanity amid ignorance and poverty, as well as beneath race and color lines. It did not matter whether he was with the Kanakas in the Hawaiian Islands, or with the choice youth of New England at Williams College ; as a captain of his company of Troy citizens, or in command of his Ninth Maryland Negro Troops at Gettysburg ; whether he was adjusting relations between former master and slave on the Virginia peninsula or teaching two—and perhaps three races—the dignity and beauty of labor, and the grandeur and glory of service.

He had faith in all humanity, in the Negro, in the Indian, in the Southern white man. He believed in the ultimate triumph of right and justice and good will, in a wholesome and happy adjustment between races, and he was willing to work unfalteringly towards its accomplishment. It was this hopefulness, this zeal, with which he was able to thoroughly inspire those who were so fortunate as to come under his instruction and influence.

Thus we have this great institution with all that has grown out of it, not only other institutions, but what is more beautiful, its educational ideals—the spirit of Hampton, and the spirit of the larger Hampton as well.

It is sometimes said that the Negro was placed in America and in the South by accident. That may be true. But I believe that the Divine Hand had as much to do with placing the Negro

* Delivered at Hampton Institute, on Sunday, February 4, 1917 in celebration of Founder's Day

in America and in the South as it had with placing the Jews in Egypt. The Negro's presence may have added something to the annoyance of his white brother. It has certainly added a great deal to his economic, and much, it may be, to his religious and spiritual development.

Dr. Washington frequently expressed his pride in being a Negro. He was fond of telling what a wonderful chance he had to serve his race and through it the country. He was right. We Negroes of America have a wonderful chance, one almost to be envied, to help in shaping the lives, the destiny, not only of the Negroes of this land, but also those of Africa.

The opportunity and the grave responsibility of the white man, however, in shaping the destiny of the Negro people, are almost as great and even more awful to contemplate, because our language, our customs, our conduct, are very largely shaped in accordance with the standards of the race that surrounds us. What a wonderful chance God has given the white people, then, and especially those in the South, to set an example and to help, directly and indirectly, in the training of these eight or nine millions of people !

However much the white man may desire to shirk responsibility as regards the Negro, he must, in his sober moods, feel that he is really and truly his brother's keeper. Our activities are so intimately interwoven that the life and conduct of one race cannot but have its influence upon the other ; and the stronger, more dominant race, must therefore have the stronger and more dominant influence, for good or evil.

Few men saw as did General Armstrong how necessary it was that the two races should be satisfactorily adjusted to the new relationship which was bound to follow Emancipation. He said : " Hampton has blessed me in so many ways. Along with it have come the best people of this country for my friends and helpers ; and then such a grand chance to do something directly for those set free by war, and *indirectly for those who were conquered.*" His object was not merely to help the Negro, important as that was, but to help the nation, the North and the South, white and black.

General Armstrong saw, as we today see and understand, that ignorance breeds disease, physical as well as moral. When the infection once starts, it does not stop in the alley or in the cabin of the Negro, but finds its way to the heights and to the mansions of the white man. He believed that the highest development of the Negro was very necessary to the highest development of the white man.

The Negro is sometimes accused of being a cowardly race. The fact is cited that the Negro did not rise up during the war

between the states and massacre the wives and children of the masters who were fighting for his continued enslavement. His accusers forget that the Negro always kept fresh and alive his faith in God. His religion was his beacon light. There are also hundreds of touching instances that reveal something of the loving tenderness that existed between the slaves and their owners. I hold, and can hold, no brief for slavery; and yet it cannot be denied that there was much of kindness existing during the period, now happily passed, that constrained the Negro slave to protect with his life those left in his care.

It is my belief that kindness today, rather than cruelty, will bring about friendly coöperation between white man and black man, Teuton and Saxon, rich and poor, capital and labor—a coöperation we all so much desire.

Sad and humiliating as it truly is for the family, friends—yes, and race—of those who, charged with crime, are denied an orderly and impartial trial and unfortunately fall victims to the mob, it is much more unfortunate, in my judgment, for the mob, for their children and friends—yes, and their race also. The vicious reaction of hatred on the unfortunate possessor is far more to be dreaded than its results upon the humble creature who suffers from it. The white race should not, and will not much longer, I believe, allow such barbarous misrepresentations of our civilization. The world is coming more and more to the point where it will see that you cannot hate out, abuse out, shoot out, or lynch out human imperfections, real or imaginary. We are learning that any permanent eradication must come through patience, faith, kindness, and good will.

In the final analysis, the great glory of America will not be tested by its wealth, its learning, its skill, its culture merely, nor yet by its efficiency, important as these are. The real test lies in the ability of average American citizens—those who make and who execute the laws, those who have taken to themselves the great responsibility of directing the affairs of government, those who have been so greatly blessed with wealth and culture and influence—if they love their country, to see that absolute and exact justice is done to every man, rich and poor, learned and unlearned; that justice is done to those who are different physically from themselves; that black men and women are given a fair and equal chance for training and for education, a chance to live in pleasant and wholesome surroundings, are guaranteed life and liberty; that Negroes are taught to respect the courts of this country and not to feel, as the average Negro too often feels, that the court is a place for punishment only, rather than a place for justice.

Democracy and Christianity are being tested and tried as by

fire, but I firmly believe that democracy, that Christianity, that America, will stand this test. After all the misunderstandings and friction, after all the bitterness and hatred, the sober thought of the educated, Christian white man of the South, as well as that of the educated Christian Negro, has come to the verge of a period when good will, and peace with honor and justice to all concerned, and mutual understanding, seem more possible than ever. While there are still prejudices and hatred on the part of some Negroes and white men in the South, it is well to keep in mind the fact that the Negroes of the South are not all lazy and criminals, and that all the white men of the South are not Negro haters and lynchers. Such incidents as the following have been happening ever since the war between the states, but they don't always find their way into public print.

A Negro was under indictment for murder. When the case was called in the superior court, it is said that General Toombs arose and said: "Mr. Clerk, mark my name as counsel for the defendant." The State's witnesses made a plausible case against the accused. At last the time for the defense arrived. General Toombs began: "May it please the court and you gentlemen of the jury. At the battle of Gettysburg, when General Pickett's charge had been repulsed, a Confederate colonel, severely wounded, was left on the field. The Federals were raking the ground with their batteries and no soldier dared to rescue his leader. At that moment a black form was seen to move forward through the Confederate lines, and, in spite of the lead and iron hail, he rushed to the wounded officer. He took him in his arms tenderly and carried him back to safety. That colonel was my brother. A hero who could do that at Gettysburg cannot be a murderer today. Stand up, Tom, and open your shirt." The Negro did as directed, showing the scar of the wound received in his heroic devotion. General Toombs left the case with the Southern white men of that jury who immediately returned a verdict of not guilty.

Many other stories could be recounted showing the continuance and growth of mutual consideration between the races. We have not yet forgotten San Juan Hill, while the heroism of the black and white troopers during the Carrizal tragedy is still fresh in our minds. Colonel Henry Watterson, in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, thus describes that fateful event:—

"The black man fought in the deadly shambles side by side with the white man, following always, fighting always as his lieutenant fought.

"And, finally, when Adair, literally shot to pieces, fell in his tracks, his last command to his black trooper was to leave him and save own his life. Even then the heroic Negro paused in the midst of that hell of carnage for a final service to his officer.

Bearing a charmed life, he fought his way out. He saw that Adair had fallen with his head in the water. With superb loyalty, the black trooper turned and went back into the maelstrom of death, lifted the head of his superior, leaned him against a tree, and left him there, dead with dignity, when it was impossible to serve any more.

"There is not a finer piece of soldierly devotion and heroic comradeship in the history of modern warfare," said Colonel Watterson, "than that of Henry Adair and the black trooper who fought by him at Carrizal.

"The historian of that brief but bloody drama has rescued the name of Henry Adair and written it high in the annals of American heroism where it will live with illustrious heroes of his race.

"I think the name of the black trooper should be rescued from obscurity and written side by side with that of his officer. If Henry Adair had survived this modern Alamo, he would have seen to it that this Negro was bracketed with him in the heroic annals of the affray.

"As Henry Adair did not live to do it, we should see that this justice is done. As the son of a Confederate officer who fought to the end of the Civil War, as a publicist who has studied the race question, and once, in serious honesty, preached the doctrine of separation of the races, I ask that from the records of that last fatal charge at Carrizal there should be recovered the name of that black soldier whose heroic loyalty to this white comrade touches the high-water mark of soldierly devotion and deathless courage, linking the two races that henceforth must live together and fight together to the end of time."

I am glad to say that the name of that colored trooper has been "rescued from obscurity." It is *Peter Bigstaff*.

The two incidents just cited give evidence that the spirit of kindness between white men and black men, which we are accustomed to think of as existing mainly before and during the war, is just as genuine and true today as it was then. All it needs is a chance for manifestation. There are Negroes everywhere as true to the white race as they are to themselves; and there are white men who are just as true and loyal to the Negro race. The sons and daughters of those honored and revered black "mammies" and "Uncle Toms" have not all degenerated into disloyal, ungrateful criminals; neither have the children of such men as General Toombs and Colonel Henry Watterson changed so soon to hating and encouraging racial bitterness and strife. Hampton Institute, through the wisdom and foresight of its Founder, General Samuel C. Armstrong, and by the patient, sagacious, unselfish leadership of its present Principal, Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, is more than any other single agency in our country making it possible for these two elements of white and black—the two largest and most effective—to show, without embarrassment to either, that the two races can live together peacefully, helpfully, honorably,

and harmoniously here in the South, each making its own contribution to the glory of our country.

I venture to mention here a few of the tangible results which Hampton has led in bringing about. As a general result of Hampton's years of teaching, racial good will in the South is more widespread than ever before.

The demand for Negro labor in the North and the migration of Negroes from the South to meet that demand are crystallizing sentiment looking toward justice and fairness for the black man as perhaps no other incident ever has. General Armstrong, through Hampton Institute, blazed the way and set in motion elements that are today meeting this situation in a practical, Christ-like way, making it easier for white men, as well as black men, to speak out from press and platform in a way that would have been well-nigh impossible without his work and influence.

Let me mention a few of the indirect results—what Dr. Wallace Buttrick once called the “lateral influences of Hampton Institute.” I do not believe I am overstating the case when I say that General Armstrong's life and work, through Hampton Institute and its outgrowths, have done more than any other single influence to make possible some of the most progressive and effective movements for educational, social, and moral reforms that are helping society in this country today, especially in the South. What does it matter that they are reaching their fruition twenty-five years after General Armstrong's passing, or through Dr. Frissell at Hampton or Dr. Washington at Tuskegee?

Among these “lateral influences” is the Southern Education Board, with all its marvelous work of inspiring, energizing, and actualizing definite enthusiasms for education in the South for all the people, resulting in additional appropriations of millions of dollars for school purposes. Moreover, what is even more significant is the sentiment which that Board set in motion for universal education, a sentiment likely to increase rather than decrease in its momentum.

The General Education Board, which can be traced more or less directly to Hampton's influence through the Southern Education Board and Mr. Ogden's parties—“adventures into ennobling experiences”—is another of these “lateral influences.” It is most fitting that a suitable monument to him, in the form of an Auditorium, should be placed here at Hampton. Think, too, of the wonderful work and influence of the General Education Board! That board has had and is still having an invaluable influence on education for the entire country, standardizing schools, and quietly but very effectively helping and influencing, not only educational thought, but also a great many other very important movements for human betterment.

The Jeanes Board also belongs among Hampton's "lateral influences." With its limited funds, it is influencing education in the South, through Dr. James Hardy Dillard, not only among Negroes, but among the whites also, in a way whose importance it would be difficult to overestimate.

Then there is the Southern University Commission on Race Questions, representing through certain of their professors all of the Southern state universities, in which Southern men of the highest and most intellectual character are willing to study at first hand the condition of the black man, and to use the results of their studies in deepening the faith and inspiring the youth of the South with a desire to help and to be just and fair in their dealings with the black man.

We do not need to mention Booker Washington, who was General Armstrong's most distinguished pupil, and the remarkable influence he had and is still having on the thought and feelings of the South toward the Negro. Think also of what a wonderful work he did in spreading ideas of vocational, practical education throughout the length and breadth of this land! Think, too, of what other students of Hampton, in an humbler but no less effective way, have accomplished!

All of these activities, and more, can be credited in part, if not entirely, to the life and work and character and spirit of the Founder of Hampton Institute. In this glorious life we have the foundation, and the only foundation, upon which races and nations can have real peace—the spirit of good will toward men, black even as white, North and South. Good will, it is, that the nations of the earth are needing. It is that peace for which so many unnumbered millions of suffering and innocent human beings are yearning.

The idea which was crudely expressed by a Carnegie hero student now at Tuskegee Institute who, at the risk of his own life, saved the life of a little white girl in Waco, Texas, from an onrushing automobile, is the idea which will bind races and nations together in peace and good will. When asked whether he would have preferred to save a black child rather than a white child, he replied: "You don't stop to think, when an innocent human life is at stake, whether you are helping a white person or a black person. All you know is that it is a human being."

It is that spirit which General Armstrong and Dr. Frissell, through Hampton Institute, have taught throughout all of these years to black man and white man in the North and in the South. It is only through that spirit which is blind to color and to race and to nationality when human lives, either physical, mental, or moral, are at stake,—it is only in that spirit that we can conquer racial misunderstanding and strife. It is only in the spirit of Christian service that we can have lasting, universal peace. It is this spirit which General Armstrong so aptly epitomized in this closing sentence of his famous Memoranda—"It pays to follow one's best light, to put God and country first, ourselves afterwards."

